Ah, Speak of the Devil

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by SingingInTheRaiin

Summary

Jack is really getting on Will's case about catching the Ripper, and now there's suspicions about why Randall Tier is suddenly gone. On top of that, Will still needs to figure out what's with the ring Hannibal gave him and- more importantly- just what the hell he actually feels about Hannibal.

Will opened and closed his fist a few times, testing how sore his knuckles were still. Apparently the answer was ‘plenty’, and he winced as he felt the scabs crack open. Damn, Hannibal would probably be annoyed about Will bleeding through the carefully placed bandages. But then Will decided he didn’t care, because annoying Hannibal could be rather fun at times, especially while he was (mostly) secure in the knowledge that Hannibal wouldn’t retaliate by killing innocent people.

Even though he was so cozy beneath Hannibal’s blankets, Will forced himself to get out of bed, and he followed his nose to the kitchen. Hannibal glanced over his shoulder when he heard Will shuffle in. “You could have stayed in bed, beloved. I would have brought your breakfast up to you.”

Will shrugged. “It’s fine. I don’t want to grow fat and lazy.”

“You would be a beautiful sight no matter how you looked,” Hannibal said softly.

Will could feel his cheeks heating up in response to that, and quickly changed the subject. He sniffed at the air, and the delicious smell made his stomach growl loudly. “What are you making, anyways?”

Hannibal turned off the stove, and then set down two plates so that he could lay out their meal. “I’ve always found victory to have a quite pleasant taste, and I thought that you should get a chance to taste it for yourself.”

Will stared at the plate as it was being set down in front of him. So at least some part of this meal was Randall Tier. Will knew that the thought should sicken him. Even though he suspected that Hannibal had been feeding him human meat for a while, probably since Will had stopped being so strict about watching him cook, but to actually know for a fact that that’s what he’d be eating? And to know exactly who the person was because Will had been the one who had killed him? Any normal person would vomit and run away, not necessarily in that order.

So what did it say about Will that he found himself eager for a taste? It had been difficult to kill Tier- in terms of skill, not morals- and didn’t Will deserve some kind of reward for that? And the breakfast in front of him did smell so good, even if Will had absolutely no idea what the dish was even called.

He was well aware of the weight of Hannibal’s gaze on him as he grabbed his fork, holding it loosely to avoid making his knuckles hurt more, and cautiously took a mouthful of the meal. The light consistency and buttery taste seemed to practically melt on his mouth, and Will couldn’t stop himself from letting out a small moan of appreciation.

Then he immediately felt self-conscious about it, and flicked his eyes over to where Hannibal was standing, watching Will with too much warmth in his eyes. “Are you feeling recovered at all from your adventure last night?”

Will quickly grabbed at his glass of water to gulp some down before he answered. "Somewhat. Why?"

Hannibal slowly made his way around the island, until he was standing right in front of Will, somehow making it feel like he was towering over Will even though they were basically the same height. "Seeing you consume your own kill, and so thoroughly enjoy it, makes me want to revisit our many moments of enjoyment of each other."

Will gulped, throat suddenly dry. He reached up to touch Hannibal's face, but Hannibal snatched his hand, and then gently ran his thumb over the ring. "Hannibal," Will said in what was practically a whisper. "What have you done to me?"

Hannibal tilted his head curiously, still holding onto Will's hand. "What do you mean?"

"The first deal we made, I didn't care about extending my time because I figured I'd never meet someone I'd love so much anyways. And now…"

"What?" Hannibal's voice came out far more breathless than usual, like he was waiting on edge for Will to finish his thought.

Will closed his eyes, too embarrassed to look at Hannibal, but too proud to just look away. "I just can't get you out of my mind," Will whispered. "I'm afraid that you've forced us to melt too far into each other, and I'm not even sure where our edges are anymore."

He kept his eyes closed, not wanting to see whether Hannibal would look disappointed or delighted by the confession. There were certainly no clues in his voice, which was as steady and calm as it normally was. "Would that be such a bad thing, my beloved? To know that there is someone who knows you better than you know yourself? Someone who accepts every single part of you, even the parts that you hate? Someone who would do anything for you, tear the world to shreds if you asked it of him?" Hannibal let go of Will's hand so that he could use both of his hands to cup Will's face, leaning close enough that Will could feel the warmth against his lips as Hannibal spoke. "And I am not foolish enough to believe that this bond between us goes only one way. You are the only person who could ever truly understand me, and the only one who could ever accept all of me." His voice lowered so much that Will could barely hear it despite the fact that there was only a couple of centimeters between their faces. "I want you as my consort, Will, and I will never give up on having you. Just name your price; I would do anything to have you completely mine, and I would be all yours as well."

Will risked opening his eyes, and found a foreign desperation on Hannibal's face. Usually he was so collected and in control of every situation, so it was odd to see him like this. And it was powerful to know that Will was the one who had caused him to look this way. He reached up to gently brush his fingers against Hannibal's wrists, delighting in the slight shiver he got in response. "There is nothing I would ask of you Hannibal… because I will not agree to be your consort." Even as he spoke, words coming out confident and strong, Will's mind was wavering. Would it really be so bad to just give in? He'd already come so far that there was no way to turn back, so what would be the harm in going the rest of the way?

Hannibal breathed out heavily, and then pressed a gentle kiss to Will's forehead before slowly pulling away. "Not yet, anyways," he conceded. "But like I said, I won't give up on you." Hannibal moved away, giving Will plenty of time to drop his arms down. "You should finish eating. You will need your strength to heal properly."

"Just to heal?" Will asked teasingly.

Hannibal reached up to smooth down his shirt, seeming to forget that he was wearing casual clothes rather than his usual vest and tie. "And for me to reassert my claims," Hannibal said in a low voice. "I do not appreciate having someone else's marks all over you."

Now that they were just flirting, they were back in a territory that Will felt more comfortable navigating through. "I thought that it would become a rather nice looking scar on my shoulder. They do say that ladies love men with scars." Then he quickly ate several more bites of his delicious breakfast before Hannibal abruptly lifted him up and carried him towards the stairs, being gentle even now.

Will squirmed around in token protest, but didn't actually want to wiggle free. He knew he was sporting a giant grin, and tucked his face into Hannibal's neck to hide his pleased reaction. He was still sore from Randall's attack, but he couldn't wait to be sore in all the much more fun ways with Hannibal.

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Will was summoned to Jack's office as soon as he stepped into the building, and he let out a resigned sigh before making his way up. There was no point in delaying this. He knew that Hannibal would have been smart enough to clean the body of evidence before disposing of it, but there was no hiding the bandages around his knuckles. And Jack was a smart man. Smart enough to recognize the aftermath of a closed fist colliding with a solid mass.

They always said not to punch with closed fists, and now Will was regretting not keeping that in mind during his fight.

Will stepped into Jack's office, feeling like a troublemaker getting sent to see the principal. He hovered awkwardly in the doorway for a moment before Jack looked up at him, and nodded towards one of the empty seats in front of the desk. Will set down, resting his hands on his lap and hoping that Jack wouldn't take too much notice of them. "What did you want to see me about so urgently?"

Jack sighed, and then reached up to rub at his temple for a moment before answering. "Tier is missing. Apparently his shift starts at five in the morning, and he's always shown up right on the dot, but both yesterday and today he didn't, and didn't even call in sick or anything. I've already sent some uniforms to check his apartment, but I get the feeling that we're not going to find anything." He cursed under his breath, and then finally looked at Will for longer than a second. "What the hell happened to you?"

Will hadn't bothered to check a mirror. He'd managed to forget about the part of the fight that was just fists flying back and forth, since his shoulder and hands had been in the most pain.

Now he wished that he'd double checked so that he'd at least know what kind of cover story he needed to spin. "Huh?" He tried to sound vaguely confused.

It didn't seem to impress Jack at all, and he just gestured towards Will's head. "Last time I saw you, you didn't have a black eye and a split lip. So what the hell happened?"

Will internally groaned as he quickly tried to think of what he could say that wouldn't sound like complete and utter bullshit. "Picked up a new stray," he finally settled on. "Bit of a wild one, probably had a shitty home before he ran away or got kicked out. It was tough just to wrestle him into having a bath."

Jack didn't look like he believed that completely, but he also didn't look overly suspicious, which was a good thing. Or at least, Will thought it was, until he heard Jack's next question. "Did Lecter do this to you?"

Will's eyes widened in surprise. "What? No! He's not-" he cut himself off as he tried to think of how to defend Hannibal without making it sound like he was defending a serial killer. And holy shit, he was actually defending a serial killer here. What the hell was his life anymore? "He's not like that. I'm sure you don't want the sordid details of our sex life, but I can assure you that there is no beating or domestic violence of any sort involved."

"Uh huh." Somehow, Will got the feeling that Jack was going to fixate on this theory unless something major happened to prove him wrong. Will sighed, and slumped down in his seat. It wasn't the worst cover, because he knew that as long as he never actually 'admitted' to anything, there was nothing Jack would be able to do, and it worked because of Jack's already existent prejudices against Hannibal. But Will coudn't help feeling like it would be just wrong to let anyone think that Hannibal was that kind of person. Sure, he'd kill and eat people, but he'd never harm a partner… or, well. Not physically harm them, anyways. Okay, so maybe Hannibal wasn't all that great of a person. But it didn't mean he was a bad person…? Alright, maybe it would be best for Will to just stop trying to think about this.

Will cleared his throat, and shifted in his seat. "So what do you think happened to Tier?" He wasn't sure that this was necessarily a better topic to be discussing, all things considered, but as someone working on Jack's team, it seemed like a reasonable enough subject to talk about. And it would hopefully distract Jack from his assumptions about Hannibal.

Jack groaned. "I don't know. If he was our killer, he could've realized that we were onto him and made a run for it after we spoke with him. Or if he isn't the killer, then whoever is might've gotten angry about credit being misplaced, but then that would bring in a heavy question of how they would've learned about our suspect. Or maybe he took an impromptu vacation. Or maybe he just had a heart attack and died. I really don't know, Will." He looked so exhausted, Will couldn't help feeling bad for the man.

"Whatever the case is, I'm sure that we'll figure it out," Will assured him. "We've got a pretty good record going so far, and I'd hate for it to be marred here at a point where it was such a noticeable case. Let's just wait to hear back from the uniforms you sent out, and then go from there, okay?"

Jack nodded. “Right, right.” He nodded towards the door. “You can go now. Just- just try to lay low for now, okay? You really look like shit.” Will stood up, glad to be dismissed, but that’s when Jack noticed his hands. He didn’t say anything, just gave Will a long look. Will decided that it would be best to not stick around long enough to figure out what Jack was thinking, he just hurried away.

It was only a couple of hours later that he was called back to Jack’s office, but this time the rest of the team was there when he got up. Beverly let out a loud whistle when she saw Will. “Let me guess- we should see the other guy?”

Considering who the other guy was, Will was pretty sure that for them to see him was the last thing he wanted. He just shrugged and mumbled some nonsensical words, knowing that none of the people present would care about asking for clarification. He just angled himself away from the science squad, focusing more on Jack, who looked annoyed. “No sign of Tier in his home. No sign of a struggle, either. But there were these, right out in the open.” He held up two pictures, showing off less sophisticated versions of the claw gloves and teeth mask that Will had destroyed in his fight. It made sense that Randall had other versions that weren’t quite as polished yet.

Price looked at the pictures. “So I guess it wasn’t a trained animal that killed those people? These are crazy. Why would anyone make something like this? Wouldn’t it be easier to just buy a gun?”

Jack shrugged. “Hell if I know. All I understand is that it looks like Tier is our killer. So any guesses about where he is? Will?”

It was uncomfortable to feel the weight of everyone’s eyes on him suddenly, but Will fought to keep his expression blank, not wanting everyone to see how he was feeling. They were all too observant for their own goods. And now he was going to lie to FBI agents. What the hell had his life come to?

Will cleared his throat once. “Jack and I weren’t particularly subtle when we talked to him the other day. I don’t think it’s too unreasonable to assume that he might have just made a run for it.”

Jack frowned. “Of course there’s no way of knowing exactly what he kept in his house in the first place, but at a quick glance, there didn’t appear to be much he could have taken with him. The closet and dresser were still full of clothes, and he left behind the most incriminating tool of his. Something about this just doesn’t feel right. I don’t know how to explain it.”

Will shrugged. “Well, of course without seeing the scene for myself, I can’t really figure out what happened there.”

“Of course. Why don’t we all head down there now? It would be good to try and get a better idea of what actually happened to Randall Tier.” He dismissed the science nerds, and then motioned for Will to stick around. He walked past Will to close the door, and then spoke in a quiet voice. “I don’t think I really asked earlier, but how are things going with Lecter?”

Will shrugged his uninjured shoulder. “He hasn’t really slipped up and mentioned being a serial killer in bed,” he said wryly. “But he definitely thinks that I’m on his side, so at least there’s that. It’s not going to be an easy process to get him to actually confess, Jack. If he is the Ripper, then he’s a lot smarter than you seem to be giving him credit for.”

Jack nodded. “You’re right. You’d have to do something pretty big to prove for sure that you’re with him for more than just- well. You must have some idea of what you’d have to do. You probably know the Ripper better than anyone else.”

Will bit his lip as he tried to think about what he could say. He needed to appease Jack and make it sound like he knew what he was talking about, but he also needed to make sure that he didn’t go so extreme that Jack realized what was really going on. That Will was no longer on his side, not really. “Short of killing someone, I really don’t know what I could to prove myself,” Will said quietly. And if he and Hannibal weren’t already so thoroughly entwined, he would probably actually think that it was true.

His answer didn’t seem to make Jack very happy. “Dammit. We need something solid and so far we’ve just got a whole lot of nothing. Randall Tier is gone, there’s no evidence against Lecter, and clearly something happened to you.”

Even though he hated the idea of trying to mislead Jack, Will hesitantly spoke up. “I know that this isn’t what you want to hear, but if Miriam Lass was so certain that Chilton is the Ripper, then why are you so certain that she’s wrong? She’s not blind or deaf. Why would you doubt her perception so much?”

“Because anything the Ripper wants me to believe, I’ll have to believe the opposite. The son of a bitch is too clever to let Miriam go if he didn’t think he’d be safe from her,” Jack answered grimly.

Then Jack opened his door again, and Will dutifully followed Jack out. They checked around Tier’s apartment, but found nothing of note. Will claimed that he couldn’t get a good enough feeling from the place to make any assumptions one way or another, and then he headed home for the day.

He didn’t even realize it until he was almost there that he’d started towards Hannibal’s house without even thinking about it. For a moment Will considered just turning around and going to Wolf Trap like he’d intended, but then he decided that it would probably be some level of comfort to see Hannibal. Though he also hated himself for thinking that he’d be more cheered up by the devil than his own dogs.

Hannibal’s car wasn’t in the driveway when Will got there, but he reached into his pocket to rub his fingers over the key Hannibal had slipped him the morning after his fight with Randall Tier, probably not wanting Will to have to break in again. Will let himself in, and headed towards the kitchen.

It felt somehow wrong to be in Hannibal’s kitchen when the man himself wasn’t there, but Will fought past the strangeness of it, and rummaged around until he found a fancy coffee press and a mug. It took a couple of minutes (and a quick google search) to figure out how to

actually make the damn thing work, but when he was done, he had a cup of coffee that tasted way better than the cheap stuff he usually made at home.

Will gulped down an entire cup, and then made himself a second one to hold onto for a little bit longer. He cleaned and put away the coffee maker, not wanting to be too rude, and then made his way towards Hannibal's bedroom. He was pretty sure Hannibal was the type of person to not want food or drink in his room too often, but he had offered to bring food up for Will this morning, so he decided to just look at this like it was a rain check for that. Though he didn't have any of Hannibal's good cooking with him, but that was fine. The coffee was pretty damn good on its own.

He propped himself up against some pillows leaned back against the headboard, and let out a content sigh as he sipped at his coffee. He wondered what Hannibal would think about seeing Will's car there when he got home. After a few minutes of sitting there, Will held up his free hand to look at the ring Hannibal had given him.

It was so bizarre to wear a dead person's wedding ring, and even more bizarre because it had been gifted to him from Hannibal. When Hannibal had mentioned his sister, he'd had a look about him that Will had never seen before. Clearly his sister meant a lot to him. It was nice to know that Hannibal cared about more than just causing destruction and pursuing Will. Though to give Will a wedding ring… well, there weren't very many different ways to interpret that besides being a marriage proposal.

Though the fact that no one else could see the ring was definitely strange. It seemed to go against so much of what Hannibal stood for, at least when it came to trying to court Will. It was such a beautiful piece of jewelry, and would serve as a 'hands off' sign to other people, but that's not what it did. It was something only Will and Hannibal were aware of. Which made it feel more intimate, more important.

Will finished the rest of his coffee, and then set the mug down on the bedside table before laying down all the way. If there were no other benefits to dating Hannibal, then at least he got to use this ridiculously comfortable bed.

Then Will's face went slightly pink. 'Dating'? It was such a juvenile term, and made it sound like they were both teenagers. And were they even dating, anyways? Sure, they'd slept together and Hannibal had given him a wedding ring and Will was starting to fall… Shit. They were dating, weren't they? Or courting, as Hannibal probably preferred to call it.

Will grabbed at the ring on his finger, wanting to pull it off so that he could look at the engraving inside of it again. But he found that it was stuck. He immediately sat up and swung his legs over so that he was just sitting on the edge of the bed, staring down at his hand. Will wasn't stupid enough to think that the ring just happened to get stuck there. He narrowed his eyes as he thought about what exactly he'd say when he got the chance to chew Hannibal out for this. Sure, no one else could see the ring, but even so, giving him a ring that couldn't be removed seemed so extra.

Just to sate his own curiosity, Will decided to head back to the kitchen (leaving the dirty mug behind in the bedroom as proof of his ire) and opened the fridge to pull out some butter. And

of course Hannibal didn't have the same normal sticks everyone else did; he had some fancy organic brand that probably cost twice as much as tasted exactly the same.

Will had no hang ups about wasting the expensive butter. He headed to the sink, because he knew this would get messy, and then stuck his hand right into the little tub. He used his other hand to smear the butter around the ring a few times, and then pulled his hand free. The ring wouldn't even twist in place. Yeah, it was definitely stuck by some kind of supernatural means.

Will let out a soft sigh of defeat, and then jumped in surprise when he heard Hannibal's voice suddenly coming from right behind him. "What on earth are you doing?" He sounded some combination of amused and confused when he spoke.

Will quickly turned around, and found himself caged in, less than an inch between his back and the counter. He held up his buttery hand. "Very clever."

Hannibal grabbed Will's hand, and made a slight face at the slippery coating. "I'm sure there were better alternatives? I do hope that you at least washed your hands first."

Will frowned. "Come on, this is serious, Hannibal! Why would you give me your dead sister's wedding ring, ensure that nobody else would be able to see it, but then make it so that I can't even take it off?"

Hannibal's eyes darkened in displeasure. "And how did you discover that last bit?"

"I just wanted a closer look at the thing-" Will was cut off by Hannibal yanking him closer and giving him a kiss. Will easily tugged his hand free- apparently all that butter was good for at least something- but refrained from shoving Hannibal back. Leaving a greasy handprint on the man's work clothes wouldn't be conducive to getting any answers at the moment. "Are you going to explain what this is about?"

Hannibal gave Will a long look, and said nothing as he reached past Will to grab the butter, and lid. He walked extra slowly over to the cabinet with the trash can inside so that he could dispose of the contaminated ingredient. Then he finally looked back at Will. "I'm much more curious about what has found you in my home today."

Will rolled his eyes, and turned his back on Hannibal so that he could turn on the sink and start scrubbing his hands clean. The sound of running water was convenient for blocking any attempts at conversation, and Will stubbornly washed his hands for far longer than necessary before he turned off the tap and flicked his hands to remove the water on them. He then patted them dry on his pants, fairly certain that that would at least somewhat annoy the other man. "I can't believe you let me leave the house looking so battered."

Hannibal walked back over to Will, and reached up to very gently trace his fingers around the bruise that surrounded his eye, and then pressed his thumb briefly against Will's lip. "They are proof of the battle you emerged from victoriously. Though I hate to see another's marks on you, I cannot deny that the reminder of your strength and abilities makes me quite pleased."

Will sighed. “Jack thought you were the one who beat me up. It might be easiest to just let him believe whatever he wants. It’s not like he isn’t already accusing you of being a cannibalistic serial killer, right?”

“I would never harm you in such a way,” Hannibal told him softly. “Not unless you asked it of me.”

Will stepped away from Hannibal. “I’d never ask for something like that.”

Hannibal just shrugged, like whatever Will said was inconsequential. “It is no great loss to me if you do not want such a thing. I merely thought I would offer.”

“You’re completely avoiding the point,” Will grumbled. “You didn’t tell me that I looked like a mess, or that this stupid ring is permanently stuck. I thought I already told you multiple times already that I have no interest in making any kind of long term commitment to you. Just because you give me a ring that I can’t take off doesn’t mean I’m yours, or anything like that.” It was pretty clear from the look on Hannibal’s face that he wasn’t going to apologize, or offer any kind of reasonable explanation. So Will couldn’t help pettily adding, “And you should really do a better job of keeping your room clean. That place was a mess.”

Hannibal furrowed his eyebrows in confusion, but Will didn’t feel like elaborating. “Where are you going? I could make you something to take with you, if you would like.”

Will shook his head. “That’s alright. Sometimes I like to slum it with my dogs and remind myself that I haven’t always had the advantages of dating the devil himself. I’ll see you tomorrow, or in a couple of days or so.” He was planning on just heading straight out the door, but Hannibal pulled off such a good wounded look that Will reluctantly made his way back over to give Hannibal a quick kiss on the lips. “Love you, bye.”

He hurried away, and it wasn’t until he was back in his car that Will realized what he’d said as his parting words, and his eyes widened. He stared up at Hannibal’s house, but there was no sign of Hannibal running outside to confront him. The bastard was probably too busy standing around smugly inside. But surely Hannibal would understand that it had just been a slip of the tongue. It’s not like Will actually meant anything by it- right?

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